

The Global Political Agreement as a 'Passive Revolution': Notes on Contemporary Politics in Zimbabwe

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Introduction

At the heart of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), mediation on the Zimbabwe crisis has been the role of the South African government, which in its position as political and economic leader in Southern Africa has attempted to end the decade-long political crisis in the country. The complexity of this task must be set against the many challenges facing such a process, including the continued recalcitrance of a former liberation movement determined to defy a plebiscite rejecting its continued rule, the impediments in implementing the regional body's protocols on democratic accountability, and the perplexing task of navigating a path between the demands of the 'good governance' agenda of the international community and a still resonant anti-imperialist messaging of a resurgent nationalist politics. In addition to this, then President Mbeki had to deal with strong perceptions of his own bias towards the Mugabe regime throughout the mediation, and a divided opposition in which the different formations used the mediation to deal not only with the Mugabe regime but also with their own contestations over future electoral competition and positioning over possible state power. Thus, as is often the case, such mediation became the site of intense contestation in which national, regional and international forces became embedded in an increasing complexity.

The Mugabe regime through its discourse and destructive party accumulation project represented a provisional, and never total, authoritarian nationalist disengagement away from the dominant international norms on political and economic accountability, and in its defiance confronted a South African mediator whose continental ambitions forced him to negotiate a tightrope between Pan- African sensitivities and the need for Western support for his leadership in a broader African vision (Freeman, 2005). In contrast to this the opposition was constructed through a language of liberal constitutionalism, human rights advocacy and postnationalist aspirations, with its economic vision, in common with other emergent opposition parties in Africa in the 1990s, never having much option but to conform to the dominant nostrums of neo-liberalism (Olokushi, 1998; Raftopoulos, 2009a). While Mbeki and his successor in the mediation process, Jacob Zuma, maintained an economic prospectus close to that of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the weight of the liberation legacies on the African National Congress (ANC) and the politics of balance in SADC ensured a tight hold on any substantial censure of the Mugabe regime. Faced with this politics of solidarity against the inconsistencies of Western demands on human rights and the application of international justice, the MDC (Tsvangirai) in particular has been hampered as much as helped by the political support of the West. Notwithstanding its clear popular legitimacy at national and

international levels, it has had to contend persistently with its image in Southern Africa in the face of its demonisation by the Mugabe regime, and to confront the major obstacles to removing peacefully a former liberation movement from power. In the course of the years since its formation in 1999, the frustrations attendant on dealing with an authoritarian polity have had their own negative effects on unity and accountability in the opposition, resulting in its own pathology of violence and divisions (Raftopoulos, 2006). The major purpose of this discussion is to track the central contours of the SADC mediation and its effects on the politics of the two MDCs, and tangentially the civic movement, in the context of the regional and international pressures that have woven their own agendas into the politics of this period.

A Theoretical Note: The Mediation, the Global Political Agreement and Opposition Politics as a Passive Revolution

One theoretical route to understanding the process underway is to deploy Antonio Gramsci's concept of passive revolution, which in his Prison Notebooks functioned as both a concept for historical interpretation and an analytical device for a theoretical problem (Sassoon, 1982, p. 131). Gramsci developed the concept of passive revolution to understand the form of unification that took place in Italy under the Risorgimento. From this analysis he elaborated the passive revolution as a characteristic response of the bourgeoisie to a period of organic crisis and disintegration, in which major transformations in a country's political economy are carried out from above through the agency of the state, without expanding the processes of democratic participation (Simon, 1982). Thus this 'revolution-restoration' that Gramsci viewed as a feature of 'every epoch characterised by complex historical upheavals' (Gramsci, 1978, p. 114) takes place in ways that both transform the relations between the state and civil society and seeks to restructure the model of capital accumulation and the political forms of its existence. The central role of the state, as the constitutive motor for the production and reproduction of the elite, as well its major site of struggle, becomes particularly apparent in the ways that 'hegemony is replaced by statist and bureaucratic domination' (Buci-Glucksmann, 1979, p. 22), or what Gramsci referred to as 'dictatorship without hegemony'. Furthermore as Buci-Glucksmann (1979) noted, one should not assume that the theory results in a dualism between production and politics; on the contrary, the politics of the passive revolution need to be located in the changed production relations of a particular period, in which, 'through the legislative interventions of the state far-reaching modifications are being introduced into the country's economic structure' (Gramsci, 1982, p. 120). Moreover, the structural changes in the economy as a result of state intervention and coercion undermine the capacity of popular forces to develop their own autonomous politics and to organise alternative hegemonic alliances.

An analysis of Zimbabwean politics over the last decade can certainly be read through the conceptual lens of a passive revolution, in which major changes on the land, though unleashed through the agency of war veterans, remained largely under the control of the state, in a process of land distribution that has, for the most part, been carried out through a violent and coercive process that has largely politically marginalised the majority of the

population. Similarly, the broader struggles for indigenisation of the economy, and in particular the looting of the large diamond deposits in the Chiadzwa area, have added another dimension to the militarisation of the state, the terror of the population and the crude accumulation of the elite. These policy interventions, in addition to the broader deleterious economic policies of the Mugabe state, have transformed relations not only between the state and civil society but also between the state and existing capital. However, the challenges such changes have presented for the regime, in terms of both national legitimacy and punitive international responses, forced the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) into a temporary power-sharing deal that it did not want, but was forced to accept. Thus, in important ways the Global Political Agreement (GPA) brokered through SADC could be seen as one major aspect of the passive revolution that has taken place in Zimbabwe, in which a ruling party facing an organic political and economic crisis has used the space to reconfigure and renegotiate the terms of its existence with the opposition, civil society and the international community. It continues to face challenges to the national legitimacy and international re-engagement it seeks, particularly with the continued ‘sanctions’ against the regime. However, because of the growing entrenchment of the military-economic elite in Zimbabwe’s political economy and the shield of regional political solidarity along with, for the moment, the Chinese and Russian protection at the United Nations, under which they brave their politics, the crisis in Zimbabwe is likely to be a lengthy process. Added to this, the political legacies and grotesque economic accumulation of Mugabe’s party are not likely to disappear even if there were to be a change of ruling party in the near future.

In another application of the concept of passive revolution, it may also be argued that the politics of the MDC and the civic movement under the GPA can best be understood under the register of this analytical tool, for several reasons. Both formations of the MDC have also been pushed into the GPA as a result of a combination of: state repression and violence against the structures of the MDC; the inability of the opposition to translate their electoral victory in 2008 into state power in the face of ZANU-PF’s control of the coercive arms of the state; the structural erosion and political exhaustion of its support base, particularly in urban areas, as well as the weakening of the civic movement as a result of similar factors; and the limits of Western diplomacy in removing the Zimbabwe question from the SADC regional bloc in which Mugabe’s Pan-Africanist message and the shortcomings of the regional body itself have ensured Mugabe regional cover against the thunderous imprecations of the West (Solidarity Peace Trust, 2008, 2009, 2010).

Drawing on the theoretical position above, it is clear that the changes in the structures and relations of production as a result of the changes in the accumulation model and forms of employment in the country, particularly the rapid informalisation of labour, have had a number of effects. They have severely eroded the structural basis for labour and opposition mobilisation in a more informally constituted economy, in which the discipline and modalities of formal organisation built up by a once formidable labour movement have been lost to the different rhythms of survivalist opportunism endemic in the more precarious conditions of informal livelihoods. In the words of Hammar et al.

(2010), the crisis of displacement that has characterised the historic upheavals in the Zimbabwean economy has reshaped patterns of production, accumulation and exchange, reconfigured state power, and led to conflicting claims and obligations. One might add that the *kukiyakiya* (wheeler/dealer, getting by) survival strategies that have come to constitute a dominant form of social relations in the informalised urban area (Jones, 2010) have emerged as a result of the suppression of the more disciplined and public forms of organisation associated with the labour movement. With the removal of this more accountable form of organisation from the public sphere, such popular organisations and their allies have seen their past attempts to build an alternative hegemonic project severely undermined, a major result of ZANU-PF's party accumulation and authoritarian restructuring from above (Raftopoulos, 2009b).

The discourse of human rights so effectively deployed by the civic movement since the 1990s has also had an ambiguous effect on the politics of democratic struggle in Zimbabwe. On the one hand the language of civic and constitutional rights has greatly expanded the debate on democratic participation in the context of a long tradition of such rights struggles around, for example, the rule of law, the vote, urban and rural governance, women's rights, workers' rights in the anti-colonial struggles, as well as the strategic use of universalist claims around citizenship to confront the repressive constructions of the settler state (Ranger and Bhebe, 2001; Ranger, 2003). Moreover, the politics of the human rights movement has created a strong tradition of research, reporting and advocacy on rights issues at national, regional and international levels that has made Zimbabwe one of the most documented countries in this area on the continent. The vigilance and courage of civic activists in the country have made them the scourge of the Mugabe regime, providing a series of damning reports and advocacy interventions that have helped to undermine the legitimacy of the regime.

The discourse of human rights, however, has also been constructed in a global context in which, since the 1990s, aid from the EU and the OECD has linked neoliberal economic policies to the 'good governance' agenda and political conditionality, in which the emphasis has been placed on elections and formal political and civic rights, rather than on social and economic rights (Abrahamson, 1997). Under this framework, it is believed that elections will 'broaden and deepen political participation', and serve 'not just as a foundation stone but a key generator of further democratic reforms' (Carothers, 2002, p. 8). Through US state-funded organisations such as the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute and Freedom House, this dominant political perspective of democracy assistance is funnelled, in which aid is targeted at key political institutions such as political parties and civic groups, 'with the hope of catalytic effects' (Carothers, 2009, p. 5). Much of the human rights discourse and lobbying in Zimbabwe is constructed through this framework, with little analysis of political economy issues, the broader effects of global neo-liberalism on local debates, or the politics of regional dynamics in SADC. Moreover, notwithstanding the recurrent problems of violence and accountability in the MDCs, there has been too little critical attention given to this matter in the civic movement because of the strategic priority of removing the Mugabe regime. The result is that there is likely to be little preparedness for the problems that have

confronted other pro-democracy movements coming to power, namely weakly institutionalised political systems, and the challenges of succession and executive dominance that drive such parties (Rakner, 2010).

The making of such a critique is not aimed at undermining both the strategic and political importance of the human rights debate in Zimbabwe, for as has been pointed out above this has a long historical record behind it. Nor do such criticisms vitiate the need for legitimate elections. However, such interventions are meant to contextualise the current import of the human rights debate, and to take note of its limitations and disabling elements in the interpellation of people as juridical rather than more broadly political subjects, and as part of the language of the new form of imperialism (Neocosmos, 2006, p. 374). This linkage becomes particularly perilous when the national social base and local forms of civil society from which to launch such universalist claims have been severely eroded by structural economic crisis and political repression, and the major advocacy pressure is emanating from external sources. Drawing once again from Gramsci, it can be noted that when such pressures are not tightly linked to a strong national social base, there is a greater likelihood of them becoming extensions of international developments, and passive citizens in a project beyond their control (Gramsci, 1982, pp. 116–170). In such circumstances emphasis for political change is placed on changes in the control of the state, with little thought given to the broader developmental issues required for substantive transformation.

Tracking the SADC Mediation

Having set out this general theoretical argument, this section will turn to the detail of the SADC mediation. As the Zimbabwe crisis unfolded from the late 1990s around the questions of post-colonial democratisation and the legacies of colonial inequality, the politics of the crisis posed serious dilemmas not only for Zimbabweans, but also for the region and South Africa in particular. On becoming President of South Africa in 1999, Thabo Mbeki, faced with the politics of solidarity and sovereignty in SADC and the African Union, was determined to avoid the pitfalls of unilateralism that the South African state encountered in its dealings with Nigeria, Lesotho and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the 1990s. The post-9/11 world and regime change strategy that became a hallmark of US foreign policy under George W. Bush also heightened the sensitivities of African states to opposition movements on the continent viewed as the agents of such a strategy.

The Mbeki government was also very sensitive about being seen as the regional bully, pushing its own agendas in conflict situations, and hence continuing the ambitions of the apartheid state. Thus, on the Zimbabwe question South Africa's broader ambition of leading the continent and becoming a global player meant that it had 'to walk the tightrope of keeping South Africa's continental ambitions alive (by not coming out in opposition to Mugabe's regime) without totally sacrificing Western support' (Freeman, 2005, p. 156), seeking also to link the 'rhetoric and energy' of Pan-Africanism to a struggle to reform the global order (Habib, 2009). In a paper written on Zimbabwe soon after taking over as head of state, Mbeki stated a key aspect of his assessment of the

problem and his attitude to the 'party of revolution', ZANU-PF: the questions of post-colonial democratisation and the legacies of colonial inequality, the politics of the crisis posed serious dilemmas not only for Zimbabweans, but also for the region and South Africa in particular. On becoming President of South Africa in 1999, Thabo Mbeki, faced with the politics of solidarity and sovereignty in SADC and the African Union, was determined to avoid the pitfalls of unilateralism that the South African state encountered in its dealings with Nigeria, Lesotho and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the 1990s. The post-9/11 world and regime change strategy that became a hallmark of US foreign policy under George W. Bush also heightened the sensitivities of African states to opposition movements on the continent viewed as the agents of such a strategy.

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Of critical importance . . . is the obvious necessity to ensure that Zimbabwe does not end up in a situation of isolation, confronted by an array of international forces it cannot defeat, condemned to sink into an ever-deepening social and economic crisis that would result in the reversal of so many of the gains of the national democratic revolution. It is also important that the party of revolution should consider its internationalist responsibilities to the rest of the Continent and especially to southern Africa, given the reality that events in any one of our countries has an impact on other countries particularly in our region. (Mbeki, 2008, pp. 66–67)

In breaking down the policy of 'quiet diplomacy' that led from Mbeki's assessment of the Zimbabwe crisis, Jeremy Cronin (2004), a key member of the Alliance in South Africa, noted three phases in the strategic approach of the South African government to Zimbabwe by 2004. In the first phase between the formation of the MDC and the 2000 general election in Zimbabwe, the MDC was viewed as 'both a symptom of weaknesses and errors committed by ZANU-PF, and as a challenge that could (and should) be warded off'. To deal with the challenge the South African government encouraged a combination of sustainable and stabilising macroeconomic policies, pushed by the 'reformers' in ZANU-PF, combined with a modernised electoral strategy that would avoid violence. This, it was hoped, would avoid the danger of a 'regime change' via the ballot box. This strategy was soon confronted by the resistance of key ZANU-PF factions to any reform strategy, as well as the party's preference for violent, patronage-based mobilisation geared towards maintaining ethnic balance in ZANU-PF. It also failed to account for the

rapid accumulation strategies that the economic crisis presented for the ruling party leadership.

In the second phase during the run up to the 2002 Presidential election, after the surprising success of the MDC in the 2000 general election, the support and social base of the MDC could not be so easily dismissed. However, the Mbeki government had three concerns around the MDC. First was the fear that the Zimbabwean military and security sectors would not accept an elected MDC government, and a statement to that effect on the eve of the 2002 election merely confirmed that fear. Second, the South African government was concerned that the MDC would not have the capacity to run a state, and that this weakness would very quickly lead to a weak, unstable state on its border. Third, the concern that the MDC was too close to the West increased anxieties about its future role in the region. Given this assessment, Cronin described the hopes of the South African government in the following terms:

Regime change is one thing, the practical consequences in the immediate aftermath (as the present reality in Iraq reminds us) is quite another. For these reasons our government hoped that, as a best case scenario, ZANU-PF would win a free and fair election. If, however, elections were less than free and fair, but the ZANU-PF candidate was still declared the winner, the fall-back scenario would be a pragmatic recognition of a Mugabe 'victory', but in return for this recognition, ZANU-PF would be expected to move immediately to establishing a GNU with the opposition. (Cronin, 2004, p. 5; see also Landsberg, 2004)

The highly contested nature of the 2002 election, resulting in a further polarisation of Zimbabwean politics and the West–Africa divide on the Zimbabwe crisis, scuttled this scenario.

In the aftermath of another highly contested general election in 2005 and the deepening divide around Zimbabwe that ensued, the Mbeki government continued to place its emphasis on the need for a national dialogue between the major parties, leading to a free and fair election. It was also hoped that this eventuality would result in the removal of the sanctions, and that the heightened succession battle in ZANUPF would lead to a Mugabe exit and a reformed ZANU-PF agenda, on the understanding that such a transition would have the support of the military.

This analysis of the Mbeki government is interesting because, in the view of this writer, its central theses provided that paradigm for the mediation attempts that followed. Moreover, this was an assessment that largely framed the constraints of the Zuma administration that succeeded Mbeki. The unified MDC up to 2005 shared Mbeki's objective to move towards a free and fair election, but clearly differed with him on the future role of ZANU-PF. In the early attempt by President Obasanjo of Nigeria and President Mbeki of South Africa to mediate a settlement in 2002, the MDC stated this position clearly:

. . . we in the MDC stand ready to embark on a process of national reconciliation and national healing. But such a process must be anchored in a sound foundation characterised by an unconditional return to legitimacy. This can only be achieved through fresh presidential elections, under free and fair conditions and supervised and monitored by the region, the continent and the international community. (Tsvangirai, 2002, p. 3)

For its part, ZANU-PF noted that its central position was tied to legitimacy, not derived primarily from an electoral process, but from the sovereignty achieved as a result of the liberation struggle:

The huge sacrifices which accompanied our rise to statehood makes the sovereignty of this country sacred and sacrosanct, a non-negotiable issue we are duty bound to uphold, defend and augment for all times as Zimbabweans. No one party around or to come, can ever arrogate to itself the right to negotiate our sovereignty. Indeed, no one party can ask for permission to diminish our sovereignty through associations, whether national or international, which may threaten it. (Chinamasa, 2002, pp. 5–6)

These competing discourses continued to run right through the positions of ZANUPF and the two MDCs in the period leading to and in the wording of the GPA signed in September 2008, with the language of much of the civic movement according closely with that of the MDCs. Moreover, in Mbeki's early treatise on the Zimbabwe situation, mentioned above, one could detect both discourses, with a definite partiality towards the language of the liberation movement in Zimbabwe (Moore, 2010).

After the Extra-ordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of SADC in Dar-es-Salaam on 29 March 2007 mandated President Mbeki to act as facilitator between ZANU-PF and the two MDCs, Mbeki stated that the dialogue should achieve the following:

Endorse the decision to hold parliamentary and presidential elections in 2008.

Agree on the steps that must be taken . . . to ensure that everybody concerned accepts the results of the elections as being truly representative of the will of the people.

Agree on the measures that all political parties and other social forces must implement and respect to create the necessary climate that will facilitate such acceptance.

Mbeki also put forward his hope that the projected 2008 election would 'provide a golden and strategic opportunity' to 'begin the process leading to the normalisation of the situation in Zimbabwe' and the 'resumption of its development and reconstruction process intended to achieve a better life for all Zimbabweans, on a sustained basis'. In response the two MDCs set out their conditions for a free and fair election, stressing that the existing constitution was the 'root cause of many of the problems' that beset the country, and that therefore new elections 'should only take place after a new democratic

national Constitution comes into operation' (MDC, 2007). Predictably, ZANU-PF responded that the Land Question, 'and not the so called need for a new Constitution, alleged human rights violations or alleged lack of the rule of law or a declining economy' was at the centre of the Zimbabwe situation (ZANU-PF, 2007).

With electoral conditions and constitutional reform at the heart of the mediation process, Mbeki attempted to cajole both sides into an election as soon as possible, going so far as to make exaggerated claims in his report to the SADC organ on politics, defence and security, in February 2008, that the parties had reached agreement on all substantive issues relating to the political situation, noting that 'the only outstanding matter relates to the procedure to be followed in enacting the agreed draft constitution' (SADC, 2008). A joint statement by both MDCs protested against Mbeki's report and the subsequent SADC statement, pointing out that the issues of the date of the elections, the time-frame for the implementation of the agreed reforms and the 'process and manner of the making and enactment of a new constitution were not matters of procedure but of substance and went to the heart of the matter'. Moreover, Mugabe's unilateral announcement of the election date 'amounted to a repudiation of the SADC dialogue by ZANU-PF' (MDC, 2008).

After the electoral victories of the MDC-T in particular in the general and first round presidential elections of 2008, and the ensuing illegitimate presidential run-off in June of that year, the resumed SADC mediation resulted in the September 2008 GPA. ZANU-PF has used its continued monopoly over the state's coercive forces to limit the implementation of those aspects of the GPA that could potentially open up democratic spaces in the Zimbabwean polity. In particular, Mugabe's party has refused to consider any security sector reform, for fear of unravelling the centre of the party. Moreover, although there has been some movement in the establishment of new electoral and human rights commissions, the opening up of the media space has been confined to the print media, with the more popular electronic media still firmly under party control. In the area of constitutional reform, the agreement under Section 6.1 of the GPA to carry out the process under the auspices of a Select Committee of Parliament represented a position in which the MDC compromised on the process in order to try to gain as much as possible from the content. It is likely therefore that the substantive content of the new constitution will be composed of the compromised Kariba Draft signed by the negotiators in September 2007.

It bears repeating that the lack of internal leverage by both MDCs against Mugabe's authoritarian project, notwithstanding the electoral majority of the MDCT, gave them little room but to negotiate the compromises of the GPA. Since entering the Inclusive Government in February 2009, the MDCs have on the one hand pushed for full implementation of the GPA, while on the other hand they have struggled to position themselves in a state whose structure is still largely shaped by the imperatives of ZANU-PF's military-economic elite. The seemingly endless struggle over the outstanding issues overlaps with both these processes and has once again cast the MDCs not only against ZANU-PF but also against each other, and in a few cases led to agreement between

MDC-M and ZANU-PF over the interpretation of the outstanding issues. With their politics henceforth focused largely on working within the state, the effects of this emphasis on the MDCs have been twofold. At one level the already difficult relationship that existed between the two MDC formations during the mediation process grew more antagonistic both in the run up to the 2008 elections and in the period of further mediation that followed. After a brief attempt to draw up principles of cooperation in April 2007, lack of agreement over parliamentary selection and the jostling for future positions in the state ensured a growing animosity between the two formations with the dominant MDC-T, seeing little gain in developing a parliamentary pact with a rump of the original party, whose prospects beyond another election looked terminal. The relationship between the two formations continued to be difficult in the Inclusive Government, with the MDC-T and much of the civic movement viewing the Mutambara formation as a temporary irritant, undeserving of its place in such an agreement. That such intolerance should persist in the ranks of the opposition remains a disturbing feature of Zimbabwe's political culture.

At another level the focus on state power, away from party organisational work, led to increasing tensions within each party. In the MDC-T, organisational and structural problems in the party as well as internal party violence, which led to the split in 2005 (Raftopoulos, 2006), recurred in 2010 because the issues were left largely unattended to. Reported struggles in this party have, as in 2005, focused on the tensions between the offices of the President and that of the Secretary General, with the role of the 'kitchen cabinet' once again coming to the fore (Zimbabwe Independent, 2010). Apart from the changed contexts in which these tensions emerged, there are three differences between the struggles in 2010 and those preceding the 2005 tragedy. First, in the earlier period the donors largely supported the removal of Welshman Ncube, the Secretary General of the united MDC and one of the leading protagonists in the 2005 split, as they saw him as an obstacle in strengthening the powers of the Presidency. In the recent period the donors were very much behind Tendai Biti because of his management of the economy (Zimbabwe Independent, 2010). Second, in 2005 Ncube's social base in the party was weak and the ethnicisation of the politics of the split led to a rapid demonisation of his person, not only in the party but also in the allied civic movement. In the current period, although Tsvangirai's position in the party and the country is unassailable, Biti's position is much stronger than Ncube's was in 2005. In a further twist to this internal struggle, Mugabe was reported to have warned Tsvangirai against removing Biti both because of his effectiveness as a minister (Zimbabwe Independent, 2010) and arguably because of Biti's role in negotiating a future normalisation of relations between Zimbabwe and the International Financial Institutions (IFI). Third, it is highly unlikely that the current tensions in the party will lead to a split, as they did in 2005. This is because Biti has neither a sufficient political base nor the political space in the current conjuncture for such a move, and Tsvangirai, on his part, feels the divisions can be dealt with within the party structures without threatening his position. Both are aware that another split in the MDC would be disastrous.

In the smaller Mutambara MDC, the bleak prospects of surviving an election in the near future, as well as the severely weakened state of the party, have led to several defections,

criticisms of the party leadership, and the formation of yet another splinter group, MDC 99, led by a former member of this formation and a student leader in the 1990s, Job Sikhala. With little prospect of surviving outside the current arrangements of the state, it is not surprising that such squabbles emerged over existing positions (NewsDay, 2010; Financial Gazette, 2010). All these developments signified internal party tensions in the context of a broader political parabola still shaped by the destructive politics of ZANU-PF, in which the electoral power of Tsvangirai's party had yet to provide the leverage to shift the military power at the heart of Mugabe's party. In the face of these challenges, the role of the international community proved equally problematic. Since the early 2000s, sanctions imposed against key figures in the Mugabe regime by the United States and the EU, combined with the lack of new development assistance from the IFIs, have been the major strategic weapon used by the West in attempts to push the regime into political and economic liberalisation. The language of the sanctions has been cast as punishment against the regime for its use of political violence and intimidation, lack of free and fair elections, human rights abuses, erosion of the rule of law, a land acquisition process that undermined the protection of property, and the abuses of the media and judiciary (MacDermott, 2009).

After the signing of the GPA, however, the politics of the sanctions issue became a further site of the ambiguity in the Inclusive Government, and thus a source of renewed rhetorical fire from Mugabe's nationalist turrets. The GPA committed the parties to work 'together in re-engaging the international community with a view to bringing to an end the country's international isolation' (Global Political Agreement, 2008, p. 4). In the 'Final Report of the Negotiators on the Post-Maputo Interparty Dialogue', issued in April 2010, it was also agreed that the principals 'should meet and consider the issuance of a statement and the convening of a press conference restating commitment to the GPA, and the removal of sanctions . . . and the implementation and execution of a consistent message on the question of sanctions'. SADC persistently supported such a position, and Mbeki's successor Jacob Zuma repeated it during his state visit to the United Kingdom in March 2010.

Both the EU and the United States on their part argued that the removal of sanctions could only be linked to a full implementation of the GPA, and that until such time the measures would remain in place with assistance restricted to the humanitarian sphere. The US and British governments in particular were always clear that any full re-engagement between Zimbabwe and the international community depended on the removal of Mugabe. At the end of 2008, a few months after the signing of the GPA, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Jendayi Fraser, was categorical about this: 'Mugabe is a barrier to progress, and is not likely to be a viable partner towards the successful implementation of the September deal' (Business Day, 2008). This position was stated more diplomatically by the Foreign Secretary of the new British government in June 2010:

This government will focus on supporting a process that gives Zimbabweans a chance to state their democratic preferences, and that leads to a stable government genuinely representing the people's will. It is vital that elections, when held, must be concluded in a

manner that allows Zimbabweans to express their opinions in an informed and free way and without fear of violence and intimidation. We will be working with the international and regional community to ensure that this can happen. (Zimbabwe Vigil, 2010)

The debate on Zimbabwe's future thus took on, once again, the complexion of an Africa versus the West confrontation, with Mugabe, and SADC, arguing that the EU and the United States should respect the terms of an African-negotiated solution. With the human rights groups generally supportive of the position of the donors, advocacy around the sanctions issue appeared as an issue largely driven by outside actors, with the local advocacy groups in a junior, supportive role. The advocacy around the suspension of Zimbabwe in the Kimberley Process over the human rights abuses related to the mining of diamonds in the Chiadzwa area appeared in a similar light, notwithstanding the arrest of local civic activist Farai Maguwu. The key point that emerged from these forms of pressure was that with a severely weakened local civic base and in the context of an opposition that had signed up to a regionally negotiated power pact, these measures took on the appearance of a politics driven largely by external sources, thus subordinating local forces to a different kind of passive revolution. In July 2010 the negotiators of the three parties in the GPA held talks with the Vice-President of the EU and the Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs, under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement, with the aim of moving the dialogue between the parties forward, with the discussion particularly focused on constitutional and security reforms. After the talks Ashton stated that the EU 'appreciates some progress made implementing the Global Political Agreement in Zimbabwe and remains ready to continue the dialogue and to respond flexibly and positively to any clear signals of further concrete progress'. Moreover, following this meeting the mandated parties in Harare were tasked with defining the indicators, setting the timetable for the achievement of concrete objectives based on their respective roadmaps of commitments, and monitoring progress (Europa, 2010). It remains to be seen whether this will be a step towards the 'normalisation of the situation' in Zimbabwe envisaged by Mbeki.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to argue, using the Gramscian concept of 'passive revolution', that Zimbabwe's democratic forces have become part of a passive revolution through two processes. In one part of this configuration, notwithstanding the electoral popularity of Tsvangirai's MDC, the repressive anchor of the Mugabe regime, itself pushed into a negotiated settlement by a variety of factors, has largely shaped the contours of this settlement, forcing the opposition to adjust to ZANU-PF's reconfiguration of the state and its relations to capital from above. Moreover, ZANU-PF has carried out this manoeuvre under the cover of the regional body, itself constrained by its own limitations. In another part of this conjuncture, the control of an important tool of leverage for change in the country's political relations by external forces has placed the opposition and civic forces in a subordinate role to broader global agendas on political and economic change. In this context, the politics of the opposition and civil society groupings could be

understood as being in a defensive mode, fighting to institutionalise forms of politics that could establish a broader basis for imagining and carrying out alternative political visions. Moreover, the MDC-T in particular has had to adapt its political positioning to the imperatives of the GPA, the politics of SADC, and the demands of its supporters in the West. In this field of force the persistent calls for new legitimate elections have been understandable, but clearly face enormous odds. Finding a way through the problem remains a complex challenge that involves not just an electoral strategy but a broader development vision.

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Notes

A good example of this trajectory of research and advocacy is the Research and Advocacy Unit, What are the Options for Zimbabwe? Dealing with the Obvious!, Harare, 4 May 2010, where the lack of an historical sensibility is palpable.

I heard these concerns on many occasions between 2002 and 2007 in my discussions with key figures in the Mbeki administration and the leadership of the two MDCs.

Letter from Thabo Mbeki to Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara, cc President Robert Mugabe, 4 April 2007.

See the Final Report of the Negotiators on the Post Maputo Interparty Dialogue, April 2010. The MDC-M refers to the smaller formation of the MDC, led by former student leader and prominent academic Prof. Arthur Mutambara, which emerged after the split in the organisation in 2005.

Full references to all sources cited in this paper are available on our website.